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ABSTRACT

The foundations of national bibliography remain an effective legal deposit regime and the use of widely accepted bibliographic standards, but its nature, format, presentation, and way in which national bibliographies are produced are evolving to reflect changes in technology and user expectations. This paper presents experiences in Australia, where the printed national bibliography has been supplanted by access to a database. Highlights include: the importance of national bibliographies and legal deposit; the need for legal deposit law to be kept up-to-date; the application of deposit to online publishing; standards in the national bibliography; changes in the format of the national bibliography in Australia; problems generated by moving away from traditional forms of publication; and the shared cataloging network--the Australian Bibliographic Network, now replaced by Kinetica. The following emerging challenges to national bibliography are summarized: (1) increasing the comprehensiveness of the national bibliography by the inclusion of a wide variety of formats; (2) continuing to cope with the volume of the national publishing output; (3) the need for an archival version of the national bibliography; and (4) making the national bibliography more user friendly. (MES)

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National bibliography in Australia: moving into the next millennium

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Abstract

National bibliography is undergoing change. Its foundations remain an effective legal deposit regime and the use of widely accepted standards, but the nature, format, presentation and way in which national bibliographies are produced is evolving to reflect changes in technology and user expectations. Experiences in Australia where the printed national bibliography has been supplanted by access to a database may prove of interest to others facing some of the same pressures for change

Paper

National bibliography throughout the world is entering a period of change and the need to rethink or test old concepts. This paper describes changes to the national bibliography in Australia and issues facing the Australian national bibliography as it attempts to remain relevant to its stakeholders. Despite the different circumstances in each country, many of the issues will be familiar to most countries engaged in producing a national bibliography. More detailed information on specific national bibliographies may be found in that excellent publication by Barbara L. Bell, *An annotated guide to current national bibliographies*, 2nd ed. Munchen: K.G. Saur, 1998.

The importance of national bibliography for a country cannot be overstated. At one level it is a permanent cultural and documentary record of a country's publications recording the accumulated knowledge, activities and achievements of its citizens in all fields of human

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endeavour. National bibliographies aid libraries in the selection and acquisition of new materials and serve as current awareness and reference sources for librarians, researchers and bibliographers. At yet another level the bibliographic records which constitute the national bibliography are a basis for the achievement of Universal Bibliographic Control which has the aim of making "universally and promptly available, in a form which is internationally acceptable, basic bibliographic data on all publications issued in all countries". Universal bibliographic control sees each country as responsible for the bibliographic control of its own publications.

The twin foundations of national bibliography remain an effective legal deposit framework, and the use of widely acceptable bibliographic standards. The first ensures a comprehensive listing of the nation's published output, and the second enables the sharing of national bibliographic records among libraries both within and outside the producing country.

Legal deposit is vital for national bibliographies. There are countries that manage national bibliography well without a legal deposit framework, but in such cases it is because relations between the publishers and the libraries are well developed and the publishing scene is compact and well defined. For many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, this is not the case. In a number of countries publishers and libraries do not have close relationships, while in others the decentralisation of publishing and extensive distances are barriers. In the region we can observe a wide range of diversity from countries which have had deposit laws for some time (Australia's dates from 1912) to others which have no legal deposit framework or where existing laws have fallen into abeyance or are largely ignored.

Even where there are provisions for the deposit of published material, there is a need for the laws to be kept up to date. Australia's legal deposit law is a good example of this. The present law was passed in 1968 and provides for the deposit of books, periodicals, newspapers and pamphlets, sheet music, maps, plans and charts. Films and sound recordings were not included. Shortly after the Act's passage into law microfilm and microfiche began to appear as publishing formats. More recently electronic publishing, whether on discs, CD-ROMs or online, has emerged but is not covered by the deposit legislation.

Australian libraries are especially concerned about online publishing, and how the concept of "deposit" could apply. While much material published online is vanity publishing and is of little value or worth, much is scholarly, scientific or informative in nature, and even the ephemeral and unimportant has a certain cultural and sociological interest. This material is fragile and transitory by nature, and some materials, such as early examples of electronic serials have already vanished. With no deposit law to allow their preservation by depository institutions it is unlikely that many of these Internet materials will survive beyond their current economic or commercially viable life and may never even be recorded for the national bibliography.

The National Library of Australia has been active for many years in urging reform to Australia's legal deposit legislation. In 1995 the Australian Minister for Justice asked the Copyright Law Review Committee to inquire into and report on a number of issues related to copyright and the review and simplification of the *Copyright Act 1968*. Their report was released this year and recommends that the concept of legal deposit be extended to electronic material. If this comes about (and publishers and copyright collecting societies are vigorously contesting it) it will mean much more for the National Library of Australia than being able to list such online publications in the national bibliography. It will involve the Library in developing ways of "harvesting" these publications on the Internet, selecting those for cataloguing and listing in the national bibliography and finally in preserving them, archiving them and making them accessible for the long term. If the national library or other major libraries of a country do not undertake this role, it is unlikely that anyone else will.

Standards in the national bibliography are important if records are to be shared and if the data is to be put to multiple purposes. In Australia there has been a certain tension between

including data in the bibliographic records which potentially serves a variety of useful purposes, and the need not to make the records too complex if the bibliography is to keep up with the publishing output of the nation. National bibliography in Australia has therefore developed from a somewhat monolithic standard requiring that every item regardless of its size or importance be catalogued to extremely high standards, to an acceptance of various levels of complexity in the record, based on the nature of the item.

The format of the national bibliography in Australia has also undergone a number of significant changes. From weekly, monthly (later semi-monthly) and annual printed cumulations with four monthly cumulating microfiche editions, the Australian national bibliography began to appear less frequently reflecting not only the rising costs of printing and distribution but also the online availability of the data. Publication of the semi-monthly issues ceased in 1985. The publication of an annual cumulation of ANB ceased with the 1993 Annual volume and the printed and microfiche editions ceased entirely with the December 1996 issues. From that time, the data has been available as a monthly ftp file entitled *Recent Australian Publications* extracted from the National Bibliographic Database.

However, moving this quickly away from traditional forms of publication has generated a number of problems. There was much criticism of the decision to terminate the printed national bibliography. Many librarians regretted that a useful selection tool was disappearing. Others felt that the electronic file was not as useful because it contained a mass of unedited information. There has been unanimous agreement that the archival requirement for a permanent record of the national publishing output was not being met by the change. To address the widespread discontent, the National Library of Australia formed an Advisory Group drawn from State and university libraries, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. This group made a number of recommendations on all aspects of the national bibliography, attempting to meet the needs of its many stakeholders, while remaining realistic about the amount of resource and money available. They have recognised that for Australia the day of the printed and published national bibliography has probably gone forever. Instead, using the national Kinetica system as a delivery vehicle, the national bibliography database is here to stay.

To date the function of national bibliography in Australia has been largely centralised in the National Library of Australia. Minor changes in the Library's collecting were made in the early 1990s whereby serial titles of purely local interest were no longer collected by the National Library, but passed to the appropriate state library. Australia was fortunate in possessing a national shared cataloguing network in the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN), a system now replaced by Kinetica. This has meant that the Australian national bibliography could accept contributed records from other participating libraries as part of the national bibliography. Those libraries have been able to catalogue onto the network as usual, and machine codes such as place of publication and date are used to select the material that is eligible for the national bibliography. It has meant the acceptance of a less than uniform standard in some cases, but Australian libraries have generally accepted that a briefer record is better than no record at all. In Australia we see this trend as continuing. If the national bibliography is ever to contain Australian films and sound recordings (which the National Library does not collect) the national bibliography will have to accept input from the National Film and Sound Archive. This institution actively collects these materials, and is expected to become an official depository institution for audio-visual materials in the near future. The situation is likely to be somewhat similar for electronic publications. Because of the difficulties inherent in collecting and preserving this material, it is unlikely that the National Library would be able to collect, preserve and list much of it for the national bibliography. Instead a cooperative model involving the state libraries, the National Library and any other collecting or preserving bodies is likely to evolve, and recording these items for the national bibliography will be a shared effort.

In summary, following a period of stability and certainty in the 1980s, the 1990s have been a time of considerable upheaval for national bibliography in Australia. They have seen the

disappearance of the traditional printed and microfiche forms of the bibliography; the emergence of new electronic forms of publication (whose capture, recording and preservation is problematic for national bibliographies); the reform of outdated legal deposit legislation; and the movement away from a centralised to a decentralised environment for the Australian national bibliography.

In Australia we see the following emerging challenges to national bibliography:

1. To increase the comprehensiveness of the national bibliography by the inclusion of a wide variety of formats. This will almost certainly need to be done in a decentralised environment, and may require involving the non-library sector (eg. making use of metadata created by the producers or publishers of online electronic publications). Issues arising from this approach will be how much control will be able to be exercised over the bibliography, and questions of new standards and content for the bibliography. How will the national bibliographic agency responsible for coordinating input to the national bibliography be able to ensure a useful online product is available to users, and not the anarchic mass of material that might result?

2. A second challenge will be continuing to cope with the volume of the national publishing output. Despite the fact that decentralisation and contributed records will take some pressure off the national bibliographic agency, the need to include electronic publishing, even in a highly selective way with firm guidelines widely promulgated, means that this will continue to be a resource problem into the new millennium.

3. Retrospective national bibliography is fortunately not an issue for Australia following extensive work during the nineteen eighties leading to the publication of the *Australian National Bibliography 1901-1950* in 1988. But there is a need in Australia for an archival version of the national bibliography, especially for the time following 1996 and the cessation of the printed annual volume of the *Australian National Bibliography*. This may well be in CD-Rom format. Issues here will be preservation and marketing issues, and decisions on how frequently it will be produced.

4. Another challenge will be to make the national bibliography much more user friendly. As it appears certain that the online machine-readable version of the national bibliography will be the commonest and most widely used form, there will be a need to carefully design products and make their use easy for those who will rely on them. This may mean tailoring the national bibliography to give slightly different options, products or views to different groups of stakeholders.

In summary, we believe that the concept of a national bibliography remains a valid and indeed an essential one. However, the form that it takes and the opportunities which electronic publishing and access opens up for national bibliographies are only beginning to be explored.

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